

Message Text

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TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 219836 TOSEC 260065

EXDIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT CAIRO 11948 ACTION SECSTATE INFO TEL AVIV

4 SEP 76

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 11949

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PASSING INSTRUCTIONS OMITTED)

DEPT PASS SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG, PFOR, EG, IS, US, XE

SUBJ: ISRAELI GUN BOATS PREVENT RETURN OF MARINER TO

SITE 304.1

REF CAIRO 11885,

SUMMARY: WHEN MARINER RETURNED TO SITE 304.1 AT 0530
LOCAL SEPT 4, ISRAELI GUN BOAT APPEARED AND ORDERED IT TO
DEPART OR ITS TOW LINES TO ACCOMPANYING WORK BOATS WOULD
BE CUT. TWO EGYPTIAN GUN BOATS APPEARED IMMEDIATELY AND
INSTRUCTED MARINER TO IGNORE ISRAELI ORDERS AND TO
REUTRN TO 304.1. MARINER HAS DEPARTED 304.1 AND IS NOW IN
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JULY FIELD. ISRAELI GUN BOAT AND TWO EGYPTIAN GUN BOATS

ARE MANEUVERING IN THE AREA AND THERE IS UNCONFIRMED REPORT THAT ISRAELIS FIRED 2-4 SHOTS, PROBABLY AT TWO LARGE MARKER BUOYS SET BY AMOCO IN SITE 304Q AMOCO HAS INSTRUCTED MARINER TO STAND CLEAR OF 304.1 UNTIL ISRAELI AND EGYPTIAN BOATS LEAVE. SITUATION SEEMS TO BE AT AN IMPASSE, BUT EGYPTIANS ARE DESPATCHING ADDITIONAL NAVAL SHIP FROM SAFAGA AND POSSIBILITY OF NAVAL INCIDENT IS HIGH.

1. AT 1030 THIS MORNING, DAVE WILKIE OF AMOCO TELEPHONED EMBASSY TO REPORT ON LATEST INCIDENT CONCERNING MARINER'S ATTEMPTS TO INITIATE OIL EXPLOATION AT SITE 304.1. RIG ARRIVED AT SITE ABOUT 0530 AND WAS IMMEDIATELY APPROACHED BY ISRAELI GUN BOAT, WHICH INSTRUCTED IT TO DEPART IMMEDIATE OR ITS TOW LINES TO TWO ACCOMPANYING WORK BOATS (PAN MARINE'S CORRAL TIDE AND DUTCH TIDE) WOULD BE CUT. MARINER FOREMAN BEGAN MOVING RIG TOWARD JULY FIELD AWAY FROM 304.1. TWO EGYPTIAN GUN BOATS APPEARED IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER AND INSTRUCTED MARINER TO RETURN TO 304.1, WHICH MARINER REFUSED TO DO, CONTINUING IN DIRECTION OF JULY FIELD. EGYPTIAN AND ISRAELI GUN BOATS THEREUPON BEGAN PARALLELING EACH OTHER, HEADED IN A NORTHERLY DIRECTION BETWEEN RAMADAN SIX RIG AND SITE 304.1.

2. AT ABOUT 0845 MARINER REPORTED IT HAD HEARD ISRAELI SHIP FIRE 2-4 SHOTS AND HAD SEEN PUFFS OF SMOKE BUT DID NOT SEE RESULTS OF SUCH FIRING. GUN BOATS WERE BY THEN SOME DISTANCE AWAY FROM MARINER AND A SUBSEQUENT PHONE CALL FROM WILKIE INDICATES THAT ISRAELIS WERE PROBABLY FIRING AT TWO LARGE MARKER BUOYS SET IN SITE 304.1 TO MARK DRILLING LOCATION. AMOCO BELIEVES THESE BUOYS HAVE BEEN SUNK BECAUSE THEY CAN NO LONGER BE SEEN THROUGH FIELD GLASSES. EGYPTIAN GUN BOATS REPORTED THEY HAD NOT BEEN FIRED UPON.

3. AFTER REPORTED FIRINGS, ALL THREE GUN BOATS TURNED SOUTH, STILL PARALLELING EACH OTHER, AND APPROACHED SHILOH RIG TWO MILES SOUTH OF RAMADAN FIELD. AT ABOUT 0950 THE LARGER EGYPTIAN GUN BOAT REPORTED ENGINE TROUBLE AND HEADED TOWARD MARINER, WHICH NOW IS AT J-25 SOUTH OF THE JULY FIELD. FOUR OTHER ISRAELI PATROL BOATS ARE STANDING BY EAST OF 304.1 LOCATION.

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4. SECOND PHONE CALL FROM WILKIE REGARDING SHOOTING INCIDENT ALSO REPORTED THAT LARGER EGYPTIAN GUN BOAT WAS NOW ALONG SIDE MARINER AT J-25 AND IS CONTINUING TO INSTRUCT MARINER FOREMAN TO RETURN TO 304.1. EGYPTIANS ARE DESPATCHING A THIRD NAVAL VESSEL FROM SAFAGA WHICH WILL ARRIVE ON SCENE AT APPROX 1530. A SIXTH ISRAELI PATROL VESSEL HAS APPEARED ON RADA SCREEN EAST OF SITE 304.1

5. AMOCO HAS INSTRUCTED MARINER TO STAND CLEAR OF 304.1 SITE UNTIL ISRAELI AND EGYPTIAN GUN BOATS LEAVE THE AREA, WHICH DOES NOT SEEM LIKELY TO HAPPEN SOON.

6. WILKIE STATES THAT ALL ABOVE REPORTS HAVE BEEN RECORDED AND THAT HE IS CONFIDENT THAT HE HAS ACCURATELY RELAYED REPORTS HE HAS RECEIVED.

7. COMMENT: SITUATION OFF RAS SHUKAIR IS TENSE AND POSSIBILITY OF EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI NAVAL INCIDENT REMAINS HIGH, ALTHOUGH MARINER AND ITS CREW APPEAR LESS LIKELY TO BE INVOLVED THAN IF THEY WERE AT SITE 304.1 FOR TIME BEING, ISRAELIS HAVE AGAIN SUCCEEDED IN PREVENTING EXPLORATION IN SITE 304.1 AND IF THEY HAVE IN FACT SUNK TWO MARKING BUOYS SET BY AMERICAN COMPANY IN AMERICAN CONCESSION, THEY HAVE DESTROYED AMERICAN PROPERTY BY MILITARY ACTION AND HAVE FURTHER DELAYED AMOCO'S EFFORTS TO CARRY OUT IS CONCESSIONARY RIGHTS.

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